

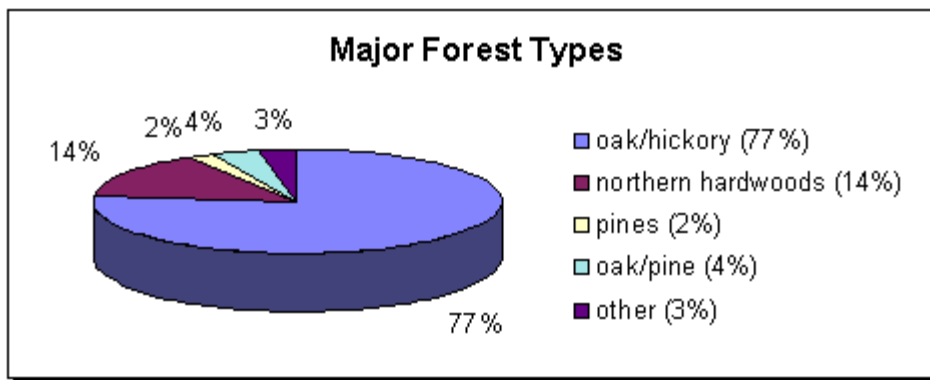
1994 Forest Health Highlights

West Virginia

The Resource

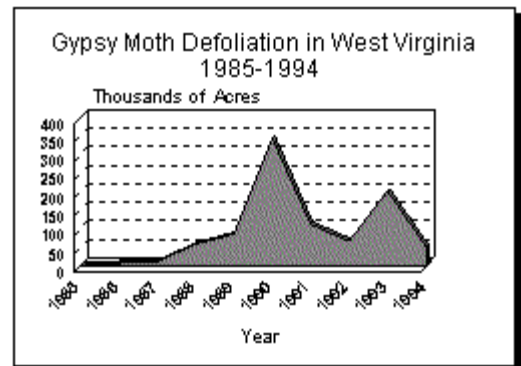
The West Virginia landscape is dominated by over 12 million acres of forest. Due, in large part, to its varied topography, the forests are a rich diversity of oaks, hickories, spruce, pines, and our state tree, the sugar maple. Ninety percent of all forests in the State are privately owned, but there are also 9 State forests, 31 State parks, and 47 wildlife management areas.

One of the most unique forests is the high elevation spruce forests. Red spruce was formerly very abundant on mountain tops and was originally one of the principal timber trees, covering an estimated half million acres. Today, spruce forests occupy about 75,000 acres.



Special Issues

The **gypsy moth**, a defoliator of oaks, continues to threaten West Virginia forests. In 1994, 53,417 acres of gypsy moth-caused defoliation occurred in 12 counties, mostly in the northcentral part of the State. Efforts by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture to control the infestation resulted in the spraying of 119,500 acres in 1994. The State is also involved in a joint State-Federal effort to attempt to slow the spread of gypsy moth throughout the remaining counties.



American beech is threatened in the State by the introduction of **beech bark disease**. In 1981, beech scale, the insect component of the beech bark disease complex, was found infesting beech timber over 70,000 acres of timberland. By 1994, the scale insect infested beech timber over an area encompassing 745,064 acres in Barbour, Randolph, Tucker, Pocahontas, and Pendleton Counties, while the disease killing front encompassed 580,386 acres of timberland in all but Barbour County. There are no controls for the disease.

Butternut canker, a disease of butternut, or white walnut, is currently affecting butternut trees throughout the State. In response, the West Virginia Division of Forestry (WVDF) has developed management guidelines for selecting potentially disease resistant trees on private and public lands. News releases on the plight of the butternut have prompted individuals to notify the WVDF about possible disease resistant trees. These trees will provide a source of nuts and scion wood for use as breeding stock.

Ash yellows, an insect vectored, systemic disease of ash trees was first detected in the State in 1992 in two locations. By 1994, ash yellows had been confirmed in 13 widely scattered locations in 10 counties. These counties include Putnam, Monongalia, Roane, Cabell, Jackson, Harrison, Mineral, Morgan, Wayne, and

Ritchie. Known infection centers will be revisited annually and further surveys are planned for the 45 counties that have not yet been confirmed.

Large numbers of **cherry scallop shell moths** were reported in Randolph County in early June of 1994. Late summer aerial surveys mapped cherry scallop shell moth defoliation in Randolph County on Middle Mountain (2,766 acres), northern Pocahontas County (52 acres), and Twin Mountain Orchard in Hardy County (280 acres). Greenbrier County also experienced cherry scallop shell moth defoliation, but no acreage totals were obtained. Elsewhere over the State, damage was light.

Other Issues

The severe winter weather of 1993-94 caused considerable damage to pines in the southern and southwestern counties of the State. The WVDF estimated damage at 25 percent of the total growing stock volume of Virginia pine. Damage was calculated at 41.9 million cubic feet.

Additionally, moderate to heavy hail damage to 500 acres of timber on Short Mountain in Hampshire County was reported in late May.

For 1994 there were 1,201 fires burning 56,286 acres. This caused an estimated damage of \$16,731,944. The number one cause of forest fires in West Virginia is incendiary with debris

burning a distant second. Trees damaged by fire in the 1950's,

60's, and 70's are now dying and falling. These dead and dying trees are a prime cause of breakovers on contained fires. Additionally, many of our fires occur in the same general areas, thus compounding the damage to previously injured trees.

Regional Surveys

FOREST HEALTH MONITORING PROJECT

During 1995, West Virginia began participating in the National Forest Health Monitoring Program. Permanent monitoring sites have been established Statewide in order to assess long-term changes in forest conditions and forest stressors. Crown conditions, tree damage, lichen populations, ozone damage, soil chemistry, and vegetation diversity will be closely monitored.

HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGID STUDY

Hemlock woolly adelgid has been located in Hardy, Hampshire, Grant, Mineral, Morgan, Pendleton, and Pocahontas Counties. To date, no mortality from the adelgid has been observed on the hemlock resource in these counties.

Three hemlock woolly adelgid permanent study plots have been established in the State. These plots are part of a multi-State study designed to monitor adelgid impact.

For More Information

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